



LAURA M. TOY
6TH DISTRICT
P.O. BOX 30036
LANSING, MICHIGAN 48909-7536
PHONE: (517) 373-1707
FAX: (517) 373-3935
senltoy@senate.michigan.gov

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March 16, 2006

Op-Ed: March is Reading Month

By State Senator Laura M. Toy
6th District

You might wonder what Dr. Seuss and the New Economy could have in common. Well, it all comes together during March is Reading Month as children across the country celebrate reading. The event often includes a birthday salute to Dr. Seuss, whose books introduced countless children to the joy of reading. This beloved children's author recognized that children who love to read, love to learn.

We know that success in school starts with reading. Yet, this important life skill has taken on new meaning in the 21st century. As economists tell us, it is increasingly the highly educated workforce with a thirst for learning that drives economic growth in our knowledge-based economy. So learning to read - and reading well - is more important than ever.

While formal reading instruction most often occurs in school, there is much we can do outside of the classroom. As a child's first and most important teacher, parents have a special role in helping children learn. Educators suggest even very young children can benefit from these reading tips:

- Read to your child every day.
- Encourage your child to read to you.
- Help your child get a library card and use it often.
- Give a book as a gift for birthdays and special occasions.
- Keep books and newspapers in your home.
- READ! Let your child see how much you value reading.

Of course, reading is more than a job skill or the means to a better paycheck - reading is fun, too! It opens the door to a world of adventure, discovery and imagination. As a lifelong reader, that's the message I share with students in the elementary schools I visit as a guest reader this month. I hope you have the opportunity to share your love of reading with a special young person in your life, too.

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